United Nations A/C.2/57/SR.5

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
31 October 2002

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 October 2002, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Suazo	(Honduras)
later:	Mr. Benmellouk (Vice-Chairman)	(Morocco)
later:	Mr. Suazo	(Honduras)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-61281 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Hussein** (Ethiopia), stressed that implementation of the commitments made in past years must be made a priority, including those of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which provided a framework for achieving a more just world, and those entered into in Monterrey, where the world community had committed itself to reversing the declining trend in official development assistance and begun to review the international, finance, trade and development systems.

2. Lack of coherence on trade, finance and development cooperation had had serious repercussions on the global economy and the development efforts of developing countries, in particular social programmes. In Ethiopia, for example, the fall in coffee prices had affected the budget, aggravated the food shortage and affected the debt sustainability criteria under the heavily indebted poor countries debt initiative.

3. The Committee must play a key role in building on the Monterrey Consensus to ensure integrated approaches to finance, trade and development in the context of implementation of the Millennium development goals. Concrete actions should include market access for developing countries within a fair and just global trading system, increased and more harmonized financial assistance, debt relief or at least linking debt reduction or sustainability to achievement of the Millennium development goals. He also called for total cancellation of the external debt of heavily indebted poor countries.

4. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had also achieved consensus on several important issues: sharing of the benefits arising from biodiversity, access to energy sources by rural Africans, sanitation and agriculture as well as recognition that poverty eradication could go hand in hand with protecting the environment.

5. He reiterated the importance of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) and stressed that development in Africa was in the interest not only of Africans but also of the rest of the world. Recognition of that fact would give rise to mutual accountability and mutual obligation. He therefore welcomed recognition by the President of the World Bank of the need for mutual commitment and mutual accountability when implementing the Millennium development goals. The New Agenda for the Development of Africa outlined the basic parameters of good economic and political governance and each African country must assume responsibility for deciding its policies accordingly, with the support of the international community. He expressed the hope that the Committee would lay the groundwork for a mechanism to follow up on implementation of the Agenda.

6. The development goals set for 2015 were crucial for development efforts and constituted an important step towards a just, fair and equitable world. The international community must focus on establishing a mechanism to implement those commitments. Initial efforts to make progress towards those goals had not been encouraging and it was therefore urgent to act decisively.

7. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said that although the gulf between rich and poor had never been so wide and there was an increasing awareness of the fact that global peace and security could not be achieved without addressing the problems of abject poverty and underdevelopment. The focus must now be on implementation of commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcome documents of major conferences.

8. His Government had accorded the highest priority to poverty reduction, economic and social reform, basic services and infrastructure, in particular for the rural poor, and improved governance. It had encouraged private investment and pursued deregulation and decentralization, land reform and property rights for women. Unfortunately, the brutal Maoist insurgency had exploited political freedom to mislead the common people and destabilize society. In order to protect lives and defend freedoms, his Government had adopted a two-pronged strategy: strengthening of the security forces and accelerating of development so as to reduce poverty and thus deprive the rebels of their support base. The fight against terror had drained his Government's resources and he called on development partners and other friends for assistance.

9. Developing countries, while assuming primary responsibility for development, required the support of the wealthy nations through creation of a favourable global macroeconomic environment for growth and

development. In the short term, the wealthy nations must stimulate their own economic recovery and enhance productivity and growth. In the long term, growth and innovation must be fostered in the developing countries and the rich countries must remove obstacles such as trade barriers and agricultural subsidies in order to facilitate market access for least developed country products and make globalization work for everyone.

10. Foreign aid to poor countries must be greatly increased in order to help them build infrastructure, so as to attract investment. He therefore welcomed the pledges of the European Union and the United States to increase their levels of assistance. He also called for adequate funding for the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative, adding that grant assistance for poverty reduction projects should be provided in order to avoid further increases in the debt burden of least developed countries.

11. Landlocked developing countries such as Nepal should be helped to improve their transportation systems and develop low volume, high value product lines. He therefore urged active participation in the forthcoming International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and, Transit Developing Countries and donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation to be held in Kazakhstan in 2003. He also welcomed the appointment of a High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

12. South-South cooperation at the regional level was also an important factor for development. At the meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in January 2002, leaders had reaffirmed their commitment to poverty reduction, economic integration and implementation of the Millennium development goals. Regional cooperation complemented global efforts to promote growth, social development and environmental protection and thereby contributed to worldwide peace and security.

13. **Ms. Zubčević** (Croatia) said changes in the international economy continued to affect the living conditions of people the world over and new manifestations of vulnerability at the international, regional and national levels should be a cause of concern. Recalling the historic promises embraced in the Millennium Declaration, she called for continued reform of the United Nations. Follow-up to major conferences and summits should, however, be carefully reviewed and discussed in the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions as well as in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with full cooperation between Member States and the Secretariat.

14. The Committee must review the outcomes of the Doha Ministerial Conference, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in order to translate those outcomes into action and contribute to a new multilateralism. To that end, she supported streamlining of the agenda and a holistic approach, taking into account new priorities.

15. Efforts to assist the developing countries had led to a search for comprehensive and balanced global arrangements and she called for renewed commitment to a transparent, rule-based and equitable multilateral trade system and continued momentum for real action at subsequent World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. Full integration into the world economy required both foreign direct investment and official development assistance. The former was vital for accelerating development in the underdeveloped countries but should not be treated as a replacement for official development assistance because it had different motivations and objectives. She looked forward to continued efforts to correct the imbalances of globalization, which would require a supportive external environment, sound macroeconomic management of the world economy and an open and fair international trading system.

16. The United Nations had achieved much in the previous decade but cooperation with other international and regional organizations must be deepened, for example by greater integration of regional dimensions into operational activities. Strong ownership of development programmes by the developing countries themselves had also been an important step and she therefore welcomed the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

17. Under the Croatian Presidency, the Economic and Social Council had reinforced its role within the United Nations system, increasing coordination with the other main bodies as well as cooperation with non-

governmental organizations and the private sector. It had also recognized the importance of economic and social issues in post-conflict situations and the Second Committee should do likewise since it would be working with the Council in following up the Monterrey and Johannesburg meetings in order to meet internationally agreed development goals.

18. Concerted action would be necessary to ensure collective action and mobilize adequate resources to meet the problems of developing countries and countries in transition. True partnerships must be formed based on equitable and transparent principles with the participation of all relevant players. Women must also be involved in development and given equal access to financial resources.

19. In 1992, Agenda 21 had represented a turning point in the way the international community addressed the environment and development; that Agenda must be implemented and the North-South partnership reinvigorated in order to promote development, fight poverty and protect the environment. All three pillars of sustainable development should be integrated into the overall development strategy accompanied by review mechanisms to monitor progress. The Committee must therefore play a strong role in the context of the United Nations efforts to meet new global challenges and obligations.

20. **Mr. Ouch** (Cambodia) said that the economic situation in the developed world would have serious effects on the developing world especially the least developed countries, such as Cambodia. Poverty, however, remained the major calamity facing humanity. One of the main challenges in the war against poverty was how to take advantage of globalization and escape marginalization.

21. Referring to the situation in Cambodia, he said that the Government was focusing on economic development and poverty reduction. A second socio-economic development plan had been launched and a poverty reduction strategy paper was being prepared. Security and military expenditures had been reduced and spending on health, education, agriculture and rural development had been significantly increased; particular emphasis had been placed on the needs of the rural poor.

22. Economic stability had been maintained; GDP had grown by 7.7 and 6.73 per cent in 2000 and 2001 respectively and was expected to grow between 5 and 5.5 per cent in 2002. Inflation was close to zero and the exchange rate remained stable. He welcomed the appointment of a High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and called for that Office to be strengthened.

23. The Monterrey Consensus had been a landmark global agreement between developed and developing nations in which both sides recognized their responsibilities. The Johannesburg Summit had reaffirmed Agenda 21 and set out common but differentiated responsibilities. The Doha Ministerial Conference had acknowledged the role of international trade in economic development and poverty eradication. Continued negotiations should facilitate full integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system and replace protectionism with multilateralism. He regretted, however, that progress had been slow and that developing countries still found it difficult to join the World Trade Organization.

24. He welcomed the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a truly African-led initiative, and urged the international community to support it. The creation of a new worldwide partnership to promote development goals would ensure growth and promote North-South harmony.

25. **Ms. Goh** (Singapore) said that while globalization posed difficulties, it was recognized that it also presented huge opportunities. What really mattered was learning why some countries had been more successful than others in seizing the opportunities and benefits of globalization. The answer to that question depended in large part on how different countries had adjusted to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by globalization and the quality of their public governance.

26. In the context of a global economic slowdown, the continual struggle to counter protectionism had become even more pressing. The international community needed to work together to ensure market access for the goods and services of all countries. However, free trade would not be enough for the poorest countries, many of which still lacked the basic infrastructure necessary to participate actively in the global economy. Indeed, development assistance directed towards capacity-building and training was

still necessary. On the other hand, attempts to link market access and development assistance to utopian human rights, environmental and labour protection standards should be resisted.

27. While globalization brought opportunities for growth, it was not itself a solution to underdevelopment. Good governance was a prerequisite for the equitable redistribution of its benefits and therefore warranted as much attention as trade reforms and poverty eradication programmes. While no "one-size-fits-all" formula existed, transparency, accountability and the rule of law were universal elements of good governance. National governments bore the primary responsibility for progress, but good governance required inclusive and participatory processes at both national and international levels.

28. The Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences had provided the international community with the platforms from which to seek infrastructural development. The United Nations must work towards the concrete implementation of the recommendations of those conferences or risk institutional collapse. All relevant actors and non-governmental organizations must also be engaged if the quest for a more holistic and sustained approach towards development was to be successful. In that regard, strengthened cooperation between developed and developing countries and increased collaboration with the United Nations, WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank would be crucial in achieving the goals that had been set at the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences.

29. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) said that a clear and firm consensus seemed to be emerging on the pressing need to implement the commitments expressed in the Millennium development goals and reaffirmed at the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences. The main challenge was how to ensure speedy and sustainable implementation at both the national and global levels. Her country had established a national inter-agency task force, which was working closely together with the United Nations agencies to implement the Millennium development goals. It had also launched a national "Good Governance for Human Security" programme and was encouraging domestic industry, rehabilitating the banking sector, upgrading living standards and ensuring equitable social and educational opportunities. Structural reforms would be intensified and an export-oriented, private sector-led economy would be encouraged.

30. However, internal policies alone might not be sufficient to ensure sustained economic growth. Less developed, structurally disadvantaged countries needed assistance to withstand the destructive external forces that were unleashed in a globally liberalized trade and financial system. Development of a new, more equitable system of international governance, or a new multilateralism, would be of considerable assistance to those countries. The United Nations was uniquely placed to provide for global governance in the economic and social spheres, allowing the South equal participation in the decision-making process. The new development partnership between North and South should be based on justice, equitable sharing of global market opportunities and mutual cooperation. Moreover, the policies of WTO should actively level the playing field in the global trade regime, improving market access for developing countries. Abolition of all trade barriers would provide a much larger boost for developing countries than all the ODA and debt relief granted so far.

31. However, in a time of scarce private funding, ODA was needed to support the development efforts of the less fortunate countries. Pledges by developed countries to increase their ODA to 0.7 per cent of GNP were still critical, as were efforts in both donor and recipient countries to improve ODA quality and effectiveness. Moreover, the external debt situation of a number of low- and middle-income developing countries exceeded the threshold level for sustainability in the HIPC framework. Therefore, greater flexibility in the eligibility criteria for debt relief should be extended to those countries.

32. **Ms. Cruz Rubio** (El Salvador) expressed concern about the economic problems facing developing countries as a result of globalization. While cooperation based on principles and rules acceptable to all was needed now more than ever before, turning the clock back on globalization was not an option. The recent conferences and summits organized by the United Nations established structural frameworks for the implementation of specific commitments geared towards the development and well-being of peoples; the General Assembly, and the Second Committee had an essential role to play in the follow-up to those conferences and summits.

33. Her delegation was particularly interested in adopting a risk-management approach so as to minimize the high levels of vulnerability of the populations of countries affected by natural disasters. It also supported the preparatory work for the World Summit on the Information Society, since it was convinced of the potential benefits that connectivity and knowledge could provide for the future development of free societies.

34. **Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau** (Viet Nam) said that the international community should do its utmost to ensure that developing countries were not further marginalized from the economic mainstream, since that would threaten the economic security and long-term interest of all nations. Globalization should be reshaped to make it more equitable and beneficial to people in the developing world. An equitable international economic order and comprehensive measures were needed to guarantee the full participation of developing countries in the decision-making processes aimed at resolving world economic problems. The international financial architecture should be reformed to ensure financial resources for development, maintain economic stability and prevent financial crises.

35. Eradicating poverty, achieving sustainable development and bridging the development gap must take pride of place on the international agenda. Developing countries, working with the international community, should implement effective development strategies in striving to achieve development goals. The commitments made and measures taken at conferences such as those of Monterrey and Johannesburg marked only the first steps. More painstaking and overwhelming global efforts would be needed to bridge the gap between commitments and actions.

36. Developed countries must fully implement their commitments to provide better market access, adequate ODA, debt relief and technology transfer. In order to address new requirements for development in the context of globalization, there should be a substantial, guaranteed increase in ODA to meet the set targets of 0.7 per cent of GNP and fresh financial resources should be mobilized. Since trade played a key role in development, developing countries should be granted preferential trade treatment to facilitate access for their goods to developed country markets, and every effort should be made to facilitate their accession to WTO.

37. Finally, his delegation welcomed the international community's efforts to address the issues of financing for development and sustainable development and hoped that the views, needs and priorities of the developing world in that regard would be better taken into account in future.

38. **Mr. Gallardo Aparicio** (Bolivia) said that the commitments made at the Monterrey and Johannesburg Conferences should be followed up and implemented. Moreover, on the basis of the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, his delegation believed that the goal of sustainable social and economic development could best be achieved through a combination of national efforts and international support. The most effective international assistance was the one that respected the decisions and plans of the countries concerned. Imposing rigid and unilateral recipes usually created more problems than they solved.

39. It was regrettable that globalization had increased the gap between citizens within specific countries as well as between citizens of different countries. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as a means of continuing the follow-up and fulfilment of the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States.

40. While globalization created opportunities, it also exacerbated the social problems and marginalization of developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, that needed special consideration particularly in the context of poverty eradication. Noting that every citizen should have the opportunity to fight for his place in the sun and have the right to work, produce and sell, he emphasized that those who advocated open markets should not close theirs. Free trade, in the fullest sense of the term, should be promoted. In that regard, he hailed the unilateral initiative of developed countries to open up their markets to least developed countries and suggested that such initiatives should be extended to small and vulnerable economies, especially the heavily indebted poor countries that needed market opportunities in order to obtain foreign currency, reduce their foreign debt to sustainable levels and redirect funds into development.

41. Moreover, Bolivia believed that special attention should be paid to science and technology development. It therefore supported the work in connection with the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in 2003 in Geneva and hoped that, on that occasion, the particular needs of developing countries would be given special attention.

42. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) said that, despite what the international community had said and reaffirmed at Monterrey, Johannesburg and at other major conferences, it had still not put in the minimum efforts required to lift countries from the quagmire of poverty. The time had come to take action. All efforts should be directed towards poverty eradication. She therefore urged the international community to implement the commitments contained in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries adopted in Brussels in 2001. Over a year later, her delegation could not help but sound the alarm at the steady and paradoxical decline in contribution from donor countries to the core resources of the United Nations funds and programmes. Indeed, in order for the international community to demonstrate that its support for the cause of least developed countries was not merely symbolic, it should mobilize more financial resources so as to permit the establishment in the least developed countries of a solid structural basis designed to boost per capita growth rates and establish vibrant economies and sustainable development.

43. A substantial increase in the level of technical and financial support from development partners would also help the least developed countries to strengthen the production capacities of their rural sectors. In that regard, closer collaboration should be established between the United Nations Convention against Desertification, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the Global Environment Facility for the implementation of activities identified by the countries concerned in their rural development sector.

44. Poverty reduction in the least developed countries also entailed South-South cooperation. In that regard, she called for the establishment of a link between the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and NEPAD, both of which stressed governance, capacity-building and the development of infrastructure. It was necessary to establish synergy among all those involved in the implementation of NEPAD and the Brussels Programme of Action for reasons of effectiveness, since two thirds of the least developed countries were African. That approach would help both to reveal strengths and weaknesses which might otherwise go unnoticed, and to avoid duplication of efforts.

45. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) expressed the hope that the international community would fulfil the commitment made at the Doha conference to really open up world trade and that it would undertake negotiations to combat the upsurge in protectionism. Indeed, the increase in agricultural subsidies in developed countries often blunted the competitiveness of products from developing countries. In that regard, he fully endorsed the World Bank President's statement that the Doha commitments must be fulfilled. He hoped that the developed countries would earmark at least 0.7 per cent of their GDP for ODA and that international cooperation would be stepped up so as to create basic conditions for attracting foreign direct investment.

46. He trusted that the follow-up to the commitments undertaken in Johannesburg would reflect the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities, that appropriate measures would be taken to address the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and that efforts would be made to achieve the goals of Agenda 21. He also hoped that the world solidarity fund for poverty eradication would be set up. His delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, concerning the need to develop new approaches for ensuring that the Millennium development goals and the goals and outcomes of other summits concerning poverty reduction, were implemented.

47. His delegation was particularly interested in the preparations for the upcoming International Ministerial Meeting on Transit Transport Cooperation and he hoped that the meeting would find cost-effective alternatives and solutions for landlocked nations; indeed the latter should receive preferential treatment to offset their steep transport costs. As part of the preparatory process, Paraguay had offered to host the Latin American subregional meeting on transport for landlocked countries of that region.

48. **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that her country was one of the small island developing States, with almost all its economic activities, including agriculture, husbandry, fishing and oil

drilling, taking place in the estuary area, which was vulnerable to the rising sea level. Suriname could not afford to lose that area, which hosted a vast array of endangered wildlife species, and was actively taking part in discussions in that regard with other small island developing states.

49. Small island and lowland countries must join together to bring their vulnerability to the attention of the international community through the United Nations. They must unite in preparing their countries for the flooding that would inevitably occur unless action was taken to protect the land. She applauded the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

50. The entire United Nations family must unite in preventing disasters that would accompany the rising sea level. Member States must ratify United Nations Conventions, especially those on climate change, biological diversity and the law of the sea. Governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations must implement recommendations in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Declaration. All nations must promote the implementation of the outcomes of major conferences held in Doha, Monterrey, Madrid and Johannesburg. The international community must work hard to keep every land area on the planet, because of the fast-growing world population. The rising sea level would not only result in the loss of land but would also cause shortages of fresh water.

51. *Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

52. **Ms. Jarbussynova** (Kazakhstan) said that the tragic events of September 2001 had transformed the issue of globalization from a philosophical problem to one of everyday reality. As the Secretary-General had stated, no single country had the capacity to cope with the political, economic, environmental and technological challenges of an interconnected world. The number of global problems needing global solutions was continually growing.

53. The conferences at Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg had outlined steps which would contribute to achieving the millennium development goals, and had served as a platform for implementation in areas such as international trade, development financing, foreign direct investment and international financial and technical cooperation for sustainable development. What was lacking was appropriate implementation of decisions, and sufficient funds for practical realization. The Committee must fully utilize its capacity to strengthen consensus on the millennium development goals and produce practical ideas for implementation.

54. Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy remained one of the vital topics on the international development agenda, given the difficulties faced by those countries in responding adequately to the challenges of globalization. In recent years those countries had gained a degree of macroeconomic and social stability. The recent decisions by the United States of America and the Council of the European Union to recognize Kazakhstan as a market economy served as proof of that country's successes in implementing economic reforms. However, a number of countries were having difficulties in completing their transition to market economies. The organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should continue to provide policy advice and technical assistance to the countries with economies in transition, strengthening their social and political framework so that market-oriented reforms could be completed.

55. Another priority topic for her Government was the activities of the international community in the field of the environment and sustainable development. Kazakhstan supported targeted and coordinated efforts by the international community to solve burning economic, social and environmental problems, particularly in the Central Asian region. Her Government attached great significance to cooperation with the United Nations in areas such as water resources management, rehabilitation of environmental disaster areas and the preservation of biodiversity. A draft resolution entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan" would be introduced during the current session, and her delegation hoped that it would be unanimously supported.

56. Kazakhstan was interested in strengthening cooperation with the United Nations to improve regional transportation infrastructure within the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of

Central Asia, which was a good example of cooperation encompassing all priority issues relating to the region, including the development of transit cooperation capacity and multiple pipeline systems. Those issues were of great significance for all the Central Asian States, as a group of landlocked countries.

57. By reason of their geographical location, landlocked developing countries faced an acute problem of access to transport routes and markets, entailing high transit costs and complete dependence on the transport and customs policies, enterprises and facilities of transit countries. It was time for the international community to undertake measures to address the particular needs and problems of such countries. Her Government looked forward to hosting the International Ministerial Meeting on Transit Transport Cooperation in late August 2003. That meeting would be an excellent opportunity for the adoption of appropriate policy measures and action-oriented programmes aimed at developing efficient transit systems. All stakeholders, including the private sector, should be actively involved in the preparatory process and in the meeting itself in order to arrive at a successful outcome. Her delegation appealed to all its partners to support and co-sponsor the relevant draft resolution.

58. *Mr. Suazo (Honduras) resumed the Chair.*

59. **Mr. Fall** (Senegal) said that recent conferences had clearly expressed the determination of the international community to make globalization a positive phenomenon for all of the world's peoples. Also of great significance was the appointment of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. In assessing the implementation of the commitments entered into by the international community, the picture in respect of Africa was currently fairly satisfactory. He welcomed the concrete measures adopted by certain partners, such as those set out in the G-8 Africa Action Plan, which should enable the continent to deal with the many development challenges facing it.

60. It was important to ensure that the failures experienced by the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s should not be repeated in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The international community must focus its efforts on three areas of priority for Africa: official development assistance, the debt problem and trade. Official development assistance alone could not develop Africa, but the amount of that assistance must be increased, given the difficult situation currently prevailing in Africa. As for the debt problem, it was essential to go beyond the HIPC initiative and to give particular attention to the low- and medium-income African States whose economies were struggling to cope with the crippling effects of debt repayment schedules. A bold, innovative and responsible approach was needed, based on massive investment, in an attractive fiscal and legal environment, with particular attention to infrastructure, education and health, agriculture, the environment, new technologies and market access. Private sector involvement in trade remained one of the main factors in maintaining the high growth rates Africa needed so badly.

61. For Africa to take its rightful place in world trade, open markets and increased production capacity were needed; that in turn required the removal of subsidies and tariff and non-tariff barriers, and a substantial increase in foreign direct investment in Africa. The African countries themselves must intensify their efforts in the crucial areas of good governance, peace and security, respect for human rights and the mobilization of domestic resources.

62. His delegation welcomed the decision taken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development that the Global Environment Facility should be the financial mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification, which was clearly a vital issue for Africa. His delegation also welcomed the discussions relating to universal participation in the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. The principle of universality was a major step forward towards the establishment of broader and more equitable worldwide structures of governance which would enable the developing countries to take a larger part in the international environmental architecture. Also of great significance in that respect was the recent launching of the African Union, reflecting the strong commitment of Africa's leaders to both the population and the continent's development partners.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.